

The Bison Hunters:

Native Americans of the Plains Grades 4 – 5 Educational Program Guide

PASS

Grade 4 Social Studies 4.1, 4.2, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5

Grade 5 Social Studies 6.3, 7.2, 7.5

Program Overview

The Bison Hunters: Native Americans of the Plains program will introduce students to the Plains Indians reliance on natural resources, such as the bison, to support their nomadic lifestyle. Student teams will each evaluate a different artifact and report to the class on the natural resources used to make the item and what the artifact was used for.

Objectives

After participating in this program, students will be able to:

- ➔ Understand what natural resources are and the role they played in the daily life of the Plains Indians;
- ➔ Understand how the bison was key to the survival of the Plains Indian;
- ➔ Students will use their skills of observation and description to report on the material elements of Plains Indian culture.

Background

Since archaeologists cannot interview the Bison Hunters of the past, they learn about various Native American lifestyles by examining the artifacts left behind. As an example, was there any evidence of an agrarian lifestyle such as scapulas used for hoeing, or worked limb bones used to plant seeds? Or on the other hand, did the tribe rely heavily on following the bison herds across the plains; use of tipis, spears, arrows and defleshing tools? Archaeologists are not only scientists, but also cultural detectives.

At the Museum

Hall of the People of Oklahoma

Have students visit the Hall of the People of Oklahoma to find artifacts and discuss the natural resources from which the artifacts are made.

Hall of Ancient Life, Hall of Natural Wonders and Hall of the People of Oklahoma

Have student explore the Hall of Ancient Life, Hall of Natural Wonders and Hall of the People of Oklahoma galleries to find the one animal that is exhibited in all three (hint: think bison).

Vocabulary

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| <i>Artifact</i> | anything made by man; arrowheads, parfleches, and sneakers are all artifacts; studying the artifacts people make can tell you about how they lived |
| <i>Bison</i> | the proper name for the buffalo; the term “buffalo” came from the French word “boeuf”, which means “beef”; the scientific name is <i>Bison bison bison</i> |
| <i>Buckskin</i> | literally, this is the skin of a buck or male deer; in general, any soft, tanned skin is called buckskin |
| <i>Habitat</i> | the place where an animal lives |
| <i>Hide</i> | the skin of an animal. |
| <i>Jerky</i> | sun-dried meat that stays edible for a year or more |
| <i>Maul</i> | a hammer like tool used to pound up dried meat and fruits |
| <i>Moccasin</i> | shoes made of buffalo or deer hide; some moccasins had soles of rawhide; modern moccasins are often beaded |

Vocabulary (cont.)

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| <i>Natural Resource</i> | something of value that people get from the environment |
| <i>Parfleche</i> | this is a hide container or “suitcase” that was used to carry everything from food to clothing |
| <i>Pemmican</i> | a mixture made of dried meat, berries, nuts and fat that was used as food during the winter or on trips |
| <i>Pipe</i> | pipes were smoked as part of sacred ceremonies and on other occasions; some of the large, decorated pipes that were smoked during treaty talks were called “peace pipes”. |
| <i>Plains</i> | the flat, dry region between the Rockies and the eastern woodlands; this area was covered by lush grasslands that supported many types of animals; including the bison |
| <i>Rawhide</i> | an animal skin that has not been tanned and is therefore “raw;” rawhide is very stiff and was used for the soles of shoes, parfleches, and other items |
| <i>Scraper</i> | a sharpened stone or bone tool used to clean animal skins before tanning |
| <i>Shield</i> | shields were used to protect a warrior against arrows; they were made from the thick hide of a bull bison |
| <i>Sinew</i> | sinew is the fibrous material that attaches muscles to bone and bone to bone; sinew was used as both thread and glue |
| <i>Tanning</i> | the process of making a hide soft; Native Americans tanned bison hides by soaking them in animal brains, stretching them, and then smoking then smoking them over a fire |